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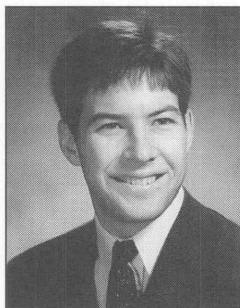
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THE ARTS IN CANADA: COUNTERREVOLUTION!

Jeremi Roth



A mouth is made with words
And how they linger like a taste
As cloud is cloth against the sky,
Stone is stone a century still
In the currents of the rushing stream

My love, your love, our love
Spilled out, equation of words
Language within language
My meaning, your meaning, our
meaning
Where the selves part and join

— Allan Safarik, "Love Against Me"

A nation's mindset is often easier to look at in the distilled form it takes in the various arts. Art both creates myths and feeds off them, and these myths are what shape the way a society thinks. A particular work of art can serve as an example of a certain way of thinking, and it can reinforce that way of thinking; so the major artistic accomplishments of a society must be taken very seriously in any thorough examination of that society. The artist's viewpoint is at least as biased as the journalist's or the historian's, and probably radically more so; but he is usually a person who can communi-

cate truths about people in an accomplished and concise way. The art of a country is not the only place where its pulse beats, but that particular artery is fairly close to the skin. Canada's art is no exception; and when compared to some cultural icons of its neighbor to the south, certain consistent differences become observable. Canadian society is much more disposed to compromise than is American society, and this characteristic is important with regard to the arts. In its literature, painting, and theatre, Canada displays characteristics that are somewhat peculiar.

In his book, *Continental Divide*, in which he discusses various sociological differences between Canada and the United States, Seymour Martin Lipset begins the chapter in which he examines the two countries' literature and myths with the statement: "Canada, as we have seen, lacks an ideology, but it has a strong identity, one that is reflected in its increasingly important literature and other creative arts." (Lipset, p. 57) It is his theory that Canadians, without the all-pervasive influence of the American Revolution, its attendant myths and ideals (freedom, equality, etc.), and its aggres-

sive character, developed differently, and thus produced art of a different character. But, while no one can deny that Canadian art has a unique identity, an ideology of sorts seems to have, at least during the twentieth century, taken hold. This ideology is the same ideology that pervades Canada in the political arena. It becomes apparent that even the artistic community through the years has been pervaded by the spirit of centrality. It is also true that the conciliatory nature of Canadian society is reflected in its art. It is through the collective government and through a specifically enunciated, and therefore limited, definition of nationalism that art in Canada makes its living and finds its borders. Its faults and its merits reflect the faults and merits of Canadian nationalism in general. When properly examined as a reflection of societal values, the arts in Canada become a powerful example of how foreign American thinking can seem in that society. But it is only when a mature and less shrill nationalism is developed, when it moves beyond government largesse to a point where it cannot be held back with or without help, that it will flourish as it truly can.

The most obvious characteristic *contemporary* Canadian art displays is its screeching nationalism. Some would say it is provincial and inbred; but the fact is that throughout the creative arts, today's Canadian art is consciously and defiantly *Canadian*. Some find this attribute disturbing while others feel that it is a sign of growing confidence and maturity, but few would venture to say that it does not exist. The word usually chosen to describe the direction is "inward." (Diamond, p. 5) The tendency to be haughty and dismiss American art as simply "vulgar" is probably just a snootiness that comes from an endemic inferiority complex, but it also provides a distancing that allows Canadians to view their neighbors with a bit of a smirk. The Canadian arts are generally a conscious attempt to be different. "American" values are consistently attacked.

The pervasiveness of this trend is new, but the tendency itself is not. The American has been a prominent character in Canadian fiction for a long time. He is never the hero, not often the villain, but usually somewhere in between, and probably the butt of a few laughs. Instances can be found everywhere. There is no school-

child in Canada who does not read, at some point quite early in his education, Robert Service's poem "The Cremation of Sam McGee." This is more because of its bouncy accessibility than for its philosophical underpinnings, but it is a fairly cogent pronouncement of relationships between Canadians and Americans. The story is folksy and unassuming. A prospector from Tennessee teams up with one from a presumably uncharted blip on the Canadian wasteland, and they search for gold along the Dawson River in Yukon Territory. Tennessee is no Elysium, but even a cowboy like Sam couldn't handle the tundra:

Now Sam McGee was from Tennessee,
Where the cotton blooms and blows.
Why he left his home in the South to
 roam
'Round the Pole, God only knows.
He was always cold, but the land of gold
Seemed to hold him like a spell;
Though he'd often say in his homely way
That "he'd sooner live in hell."

Hell is at least pretty warm. But the promise of gold never fails to embolden an American, and Sam bundled up and headed off to his doom. "Cremation" is hardly a Canadian nationalistic manifesto, but McGee's fate (he of course freezes to death; his dying wish is to be cremated — and thus to be warm once again before taking up abode in an "icy grave") is at least half as earnest as it is humorous, and the ballad ends proclaiming:

There are strange things done in the
 midnight sun
By the men who moil for gold;
The Arctic trails have their secret tales
That would make your blood run cold;
The Northern Lights have seen queer
 sights,
But the queerest they ever did see
Was the night on the marge of Lake
 Labarge
I cremated Sam McGee.

It is in exhuming the American influence that Canadians feel whole. But the protagonist of the poem carried first McGee's body over hundreds of miles of tundra, spending valuable energy on finding a place in which his partner's last wish could be properly fulfilled. He needed to get rid of him, but he also needed to dispense his duties. Just as the Americans of Whitman and Emerson's time concentrated much of their efforts on severing the umbilical cord that con-

nected them to England and all of Europe, Canadians today try very hard to assume a stance in opposition to American artistic values. There are two reasons for this. First, they want to assert their difference, and, secondly, they cannot help but do so, for they *are* different. They, like Service, enjoy poking fun at their neighbors and feeling superior because of their ability to do so, but they take their irony straight. "Cremation" portrays in simple detail two of the main differences between the Canadian artist and the American artist and, by inference, two differences between the Canadian and the American. First, the quest for wealth is never as important to the Canadian hero as responsibilities to friends and the community; secondly, burdens (like guilt) are better carried and dealt with than cast off prematurely. Once again, the Canadian draws inward and embraces society while the individual American forsakes it for the freedom of the woods.

Two Frontiers, One Continent

The woods haunt the American arts. A century ago, the influential historian Frederick Jackson Turner propagated his "frontier thesis." He argued that American development was guided decisively by the continual presence of an unexplored and untamed frontier — that the American mind grew to be pragmatic and oriented towards material realities because of the ever-present threat of the wilderness. The result of this condition, he said...

is that to the frontier the American intellect owes its striking characteristics. That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great end; that restless, nervous energy; that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which comes with freedom.... (Turner, p. 37)

These are also the characteristics of American art. American art, as Lipset claims, is individualistic, realistic, and revolutionary. American artists want to forsake the past and seize a new innocence, repudiating altogether the implica-

tion of guilt. Canadian art is, as Lipset also says, more elitist than populist, more formalistic in its execution, and more often *embraces* than overturns societal values. It continues to draw on "continental" themes like aesthetic wholeness. Canadian artists are more often concerned with the reconciliation that follows a break with society, and their characters' attempts to deal with the guilt they feel rather than repudiate it. Not all of these themes are immediately evident in "Sam McGee," but they appear across the spectrum of the artistic media.

Recalling Turner's description of the American, it will be remembered that "coarseness," "practicality," and a lack of "the artistic" were cited as examples of that type. The American arts are an assault on the (flawed) human environment, and a discussion of the encounters the new (idealized) land offered. The Canadian arts are, conversely, both a retreat from the (harsh) physical environment and an embrace of the (admittedly flawed) human one. The archetypal American is pragmatic to the core. As Daniel Boorstin points out, he *cannot* think any other way: "the 'is' and the 'ought' were so thoroughly and universally fused that the very accord of the two seemed hardly remarkable." (Boorstin, p. 55) He flouts aesthetic values, deeming them outmoded and imposed, even effete, as often as he flouts class restrictions or the genteel tradition, usually for the same reasons. The heroes of a Frank Norris or a Theodore Dreiser novel deconstruct the class distinctions European society was characterized by, but the novels themselves also assault the aesthetic values of diffidence and unity that the European arts value. The Canadian arts do not exonerate the flaws of a rigid, paternalistic society, but neither do they dismiss that society out of hand. In a book like Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*, the society and its idiocies are ridiculed without apology, but the work redeems the collective, made up of losers, as far better than the big city where the winners go. The Canadian artist strives, as do Canadian communities, for reconciliation and compromise. The American denies guilt, and is free. The Canadian accepts it while looking for forgiveness, and is never free. The quirks and even sins of the community are better to him than

the cold and loneliness of the individualistic big city, where everyone is out for himself. This is a recurring motif in Canadian arts and letters. In his review of the Canadian novel, T. D. MacLulich states: "Repeatedly Canadian authors balance a nostalgic longing for the simplicity and safety of life in a 'Canadian' town against their awareness of the cut-throat realities of life in the fundamentally 'American' urban setting." (MacLulich, p. 204)

This difference can be reduced to opposing attitudes toward one very powerful cultural icon: revolution. Regarding society in general as well as the arts, Lipset claims that the single most important event to shape American thinking was, not surprisingly, the American Revolution. Having grown as a mythology into far more than a war against England, it is the unchanging foundation of a constantly changing edifice. A revolution of this sort is necessarily a war, and the art it produces is thus "more outgoing, more optimistic, more populist, and more likely to contain violence" than that produced north of the border. (Lipset, p. 59) If Canadian artistic endeavors are a reaction to that mindset, they are principally a reaction to the Revolution. In fact, it was with the end of the American Revolution that significant writing in the Dominion of Canada began. In his study of pre-Confederation Canadian literature, Ray Palmer Baker stated that those who were dissenters in the Colonies (soon to be States) were heroes in the Provinces. Good fiction always needs a conflict, and this was the conflict that Canadian fiction began with. "Nothing has ever created more acrimonious discussion than the attitude of the Tories during the American Revolution," he said. "In the United States they have been universally execrated; in Canada they have been universally idealized." (Baker, p. 17) Moreover, in Canada they have been paid attention to; in America they have been virtually ignored. The goals and aims of the Revolution were what were to be resisted rather than the crown; society as it was (or was becoming) was to be cherished rather than overthrown.

Americans, the new Adams, were revolutionary in the basic sense of the word. Just as the American Revolution began when the Declaration of Independence "announced the failure of reform by petition," (Wills, p. 65) each

revolution begins when negotiation and reconciliation are no longer possible. Americans were dissatisfied with, and often violently opposed to, the *status quo*, seeking not to improve it but to abolish it and start anew. Impatience and hostility are constant factors in their history. During the first major renaissance of American arts and letters (the early nineteenth century), few leaders had any patience at all for the past. Lewis writes:

...believers in the future could not fail to notice, dotted across the American scene, many signs of the continuing power of the past: institutions, social practices, literary forms, and religious doctrines — carry-overs from an earlier age and a far country and irrelevant obstructions (as it seemed) to the fresh creative task at hand.... More vehement patriots even regretted that Americans were forced to communicate with one another in an old, inherited language. (Lewis, p. 13)

The American artists' vision was a fighting vision, as "rugged" as Turner's pioneer and as intransigent as the Puritans he studied. They saw the past and the present as intolerable and their tyrannical advocates punishable. The future — and the virgin wilderness — were the only locales that showed promise. Again and again, novels like Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* imaginistically oppose the hypocritical town and the solace of the forest. Over and over, life in society is portrayed as intolerable.

Canadian art, like Canadian politics, has a conciliatory taste. Where American novels, according to MacLulich, deal with "psychological guerrilla warfare" and "relentless moral torture" (MacLulich, p. 200), Canadian novels deal with psychological oppression as endemic. For Canadian writers, conflict and guilt are more often than not characteristics of life that come without overt antagonism, and often no conflict at all between different characters is needed to carry it off. In, for example, Adele Wiseman's *The Sacrifice*, it is the honest intentions of the members of the central family that add poignancy to the conflict. Misunderstandings and quarrels — and thus heartbreaks — are inevitable. There is no need to go looking for them, but there is abundant need of forgiveness of one's enemies and neighbors even if they are hard to understand. They need not

speak a different tongue to be incomprehensible. Canadian heroes have internal conflicts that are agonizing, but there need be no interpersonal antagonism to give rise to it. Instead, they "long for the (overseas) parent who abandoned them." (Lipset, p. 61) American artists catalogued faults against the existing society and proposed a new one where freedom to start — without even the foundations of the first one — was the only acceptable beginning.

Lipset goes on to organize the two traditions under the archetypes of Lewis's Adam and the legend of Oedipus. Again, the Canadian tradition is the counterpoint to the American one. His analyses are insightful, but there are contributing factors that he misses. The Oedipal archetype begins as a fitting analytical tool, and it cannot be denied that that theme abounds in American literature. The American consistently embraces the land, which in all times has been strongly associated with a fertile mother figure (e.g., Mark Twain, James Fenimore Cooper, Virgil). But where, in classical literature, the father figure that was placed opposite this mother was the sky (Cronos), in American literature the castrating father figure was the paternalistic society that settles, or deflowers, the virgin land. The escape to the woods is the *only* escape. What is left is "a rejection of the father and an emotional relationship with the mother." (Lipset, p. 62) But such thinking has its limits. While American thinking is invariably revolutionary, the targets of that antagonism, and, more importantly, the milieu in which the conflict is born, vary widely. Father figures are not the only targets. In fact, anything that restricts the individual can be.

MacLulich turns to Leslie Feidler's compass cosmology for a more flexible framework. Admitting quickly that *both* Canadian and American literatures "began as the expression of communities that felt themselves exiled from the culture of Europe" (MacLulich, p. 191) and skimming quickly over their respective counterrevolutionary and revolutionary tendencies, he moves on to Feidler's division of the American novel into Westerns, Southern, Easterns, and Northern:

The Northern depicts the encounter with the land itself; the Southern depicts the American's encounter with blacks; the Eastern portrays the

American's return to Europe; and the Western focuses on the American's encounter with the native peoples of this continent. (MacLulich, p. 195)

He goes on to amplify these characteristics, and finds that Canadian novels fall most clearly into the Northern category: the encounter with the wilderness American heroes so love to escape to. But what is interesting is what Feidler said the Northern category was like. "The Northern is the novel of passion denied and sentiment repressed in the name of reason and social custom." (quoted in MacLulich, p. 197) Nothing particularly special there. Passion is denied in many places. But the statement immediately following the one above is the most important one for the purposes of this study. "The Northern usually shows a human dwelling place, often a farmhouse or a small town, that is dwarfed by a hostile environment." This is what the Canadian experience is. Fully North American, and unable to return to Europe (the Eastern), yet inhabiting a climate much more harsh than the relatively benign American one, the Canadian had to look for other solutions. Instead of "lighting out for the territory" like Huck Finn, he had to embrace his human environment — society, civilization — and enlist it as an ally against his physical one. The restrictions of society that made things so unbearable for Huck Finn (combing his hair, saying grace before meals, speaking proper English) were signs of civilization the Canadian relished. For the American, the civilized life is far harder to live with than the rigors of the wild.

Outsiders are the heroes of American literature; but if they are heroes in Canadian literature, they are portrayed as tragic heroes. It is lonely to be on the outside, and romantic, but it is also dangerous. Instead of a romp down the Mississippi, death usually waits at the borders of civilization. The cozy confines of the town can be stifling, but they also protect. Instead of tearing everything down, "Canadian outsiders apply an idealized or timeless standard to the everyday world, and often seek a final reward defined by otherworldly values rather than by the standards of the material world." (MacLulich, p. 202) Quests abound in the mythologies of both countries, but the Canadian hero who leaves home almost always

returns, newly equipped to deal with the pressures of society. Such a return is usually impossible for American heroes. They more often burn their bridges behind them, move to a new, free and unsettled place, and begin life anew.

Painting Independence

These characteristics are not limited to the medium of the novel. Turner's frontier thesis seems to apply particularly well to American painting. He speaks of the American's "coarseness and strength," and of how his mind is "lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great end." American painting, like the rest of the arts in America, embraced and exhibited those values explicitly. In fact, art in America has consistently striven to be something other than art. The work ethic that pervaded the frontier did not halt at the doors of the studio. In a 1968 lecture given at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, art critic Leo Steinberg highlighted the workmanlike character of American painting by contrasting two renditions of the same theme: one by a European and one by an American. In the paintings of Thomas Eakins he found a symptom of broad trends in American painting. While the examples were of course chosen specifically to illustrate the point and subsequently overstate the case somewhat, the dialogue between the two paintings is only one of many; and it lucidly demonstrates the anti-art sentiment in the American academy.

Thomas Eakins was somewhat of a prototype for American painting. Fairfield Porter described him as "one of the first American artists to adopt... 'the mucker pose'." He made his paintings "out of what was there instead of relying greatly on tradition." (Porter, p. 26) But Eakins not only forsook tradition as the guiding muse of his work, he consciously fought with it. As Steinberg points out, his painting *William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River* is in a direct dialogue with an earlier painting (*Pygmalion and Galatea*) by his French teacher, Léon Gérôme. (Steinberg, p. 59) Eakins' painting focuses on the portrayed sculptor, dressed in workclothes and, of course, hard at work. The shop itself, the workbench, and the materials overshadow the subjects. The

standing nude represents nothing more than wares on display. Gérôme's *Pygmalion*, however, through its vertical composition and the central position of the nude, focuses solely on Galatea. There is also the fact that the second figure in the painting — the artist — is obscured because he is embracing the nude. The European diffidently sings the praises of a river goddess, the American boldly sings of a plain old river. American artists could not reconcile themselves to being anything other than workmen, or to glorify anything but work and nature. Eakins himself said "All honest work, from hammering to engineering, is preferable to *facture* and *cuisine*, or whatever it is the French put in their painting. Not art but industry and enterprise." (quoted in Steinberg, p. 60) The two themes of the present study show through quite nicely here. There is the conscious effort to shear off past influences and contravene the norms imposed by Old World traditions, and there is the preeminence of pioneer utilitarianism, the apotheosis of the individualistic worker. Purely aesthetic values, those useful only within the confines of a civilization where a work ethic does not dominate, are rejected. Such is not the case on the Canadian canvas.

Canadian painting, like the Canadian novel, is aesthetically driven. The didactic elements obvious in Eakins are largely absent, and formal rather than attitudinal innovation has been sought after. In fact, during the same period that Eakins was at work recasting his French tutor's subjects, Canadian painters of note were flocking to France. Paris was at this time the acknowledged center of the art world, and everyone wanted to receive instruction there. But there were many distinct trends within that hegemony, and the teachers chosen by Canadians were usually of the most traditional schools. Canadian painters were not interested in the developing avant-garde that was championed by figures like Gauguin and Van Gogh. They were more often attracted to the established *académies* of Meissonier, Cabanel, and Bouguereau. (Reid, p. 92) This was partly a result of their conservatism, but more a reflection of their purely aesthetic values. *Aesthetic* values — those applicable to nothing but art — were more important to them than the

American workmanlike values that needed to have something to *say* or *do* to justify their presence in a pioneer society. Canadians found the genteel innovations of the Salons to be justification in themselves and were stimulated by works that had no utilitarian value whatsoever.

Robert Harris, for instance, a painter who “self-consciously steeped himself in the values of the European cultural past” (Reid, p. 96), caused “great excitement” when he returned to Toronto from Paris in 1879, even though his style was not very exciting by world standards. He was a devoted practitioner of the French style which by this time was far from revolutionary. His first great achievement was, in the parlance of the day, “to be hung” at the annual Salon in Paris, which “during the last decades of the century became an object of derision to avant-garde figures.” (Reid, p. 92) The fact that Harris’ greatest fame in Canada was the result of a work undertaken as a government commission (*The Fathers of Confederation*) is telling.

These trends continued. While Americans voraciously digested and soon transcended the modernist schools of Paris, New York in the post-war period becoming *the* center of the new avant-garde, Canadian artists quietly moved along, content with aesthetically-minded, formalistic innovations. The modernists simply never caught on in the art circles of Toronto and Montreal. The Hague School was about as revolutionary as the collectors and patrons there became. (Reid, p. 120) When the New York post-modern school was bringing about the death of art and expanding to an infinite palette the boundaries of subject matter, Canada’s Group of Seven was content with their significant, but hardly revolutionary, *stylistic* innovations.

The Group of Seven have often been seen as the seed of truly “Canadian” painting, of the beginnings of a rejection of European training and styles, axes more often ground by Americans. And, indeed, they rejected and moved beyond the generation of painters that preceded them by preaching “the idea that Canadian art could find sufficient sustenance in Canada alone.” (Reid, p. 138) They praised the Toronto internationalists for their accomplishments on a world scale, and they tried to move past them. “Slowly, ...first through the assertion of the primacy of Canadian subject

matter for Canadians, then through the invention of a distinctive visual language, those who were searching for the ‘essence’ of Canada arrived at a position of complete opposition to the values, and even the painting technique, of most of the generation that preceded them.” (Reid, p. 138)

But for all their sincere desire to be different than Europeans in their “Canadianness,” they were Canadian like everyone else. That is, they continued to be influenced by European forms. Four of that group’s number were born on the British Isles, and four received most of their artistic training outside Canada. Their innovations were formalistic and along the lines of the innovations then being refined in Europe (and eclipsed in America): the subject matter of their work was less important than its presentation. They created a visual language, but, unlike the American Adam, they did not create a metaphysical one.

Acting It Out

These themes continue in the Canadian theater. Truly revolutionary social criticism is rare there, and plays that are formally inventive are elevated above the theater of ideas. In their form they resemble Canada’s painting; in their ideology they resemble her novelists. Canadian plays are far from tame, but almost always attempt to go full circle and uncover hidden benefits in existing structures. The plays of Judith Thompson (probably Canada’s preeminent living playwright), for example, are hardly timid. In her two most widely recognized works, *The Crackwalker* and *Lion in the Streets*, she begins with a wholesale deconstruction of the traditional family. In *Crackwalker* there are two marriages, one between a hardworking but desperate housewife and an abusive biker, and one between a dishwasher and a handicapped girl. Of it, the *Vancouver Sun*’s reviewer says: “Entertaining? No. Easy? Not on your life.” (Crook, p. 8) It certainly isn’t. Allen, the hapless dishwasher, eventually kills the child he thought would bring love into his life, and Sandy stays with the abusive and unfaithful Joe. Things never become perfect, but they eventually work things through — for the time being. In *Lion in the*

Streets, the protagonist is raped by her husband, but eventually comes to the decision that staying with him is the best thing for her. The evils within her community are more desirable than the evils without. Thompson does not ignore these evils, but neither does she let her characters escape from them. To return to Feidler, in a work not cited by MacLulich, he says of the Northern genre of fiction that while it is dark, bleak, and "a dismal lot on the whole," it is "easier to respect than to read." (Feidler, p. 258) A bleak or at least a highly ironic view of life is necessary when escape from society is given up, but the tragic consequences that result from the resolve to compromise have a true ring.

But while the Canadian artistic community has been able to develop a powerful, coherent identity, it is not without its problems. A final note on one of Canadian theater's more predominant characteristics demonstrates the most pressing one. Even more important than the counterrevolutionary pronouncements Canadian plays make is what they look like. In this they resemble Canadian painting: the subject matter is not as important as the presentation. Arthur Milner, a prominent Canadian playwright, recently complained that "playwrights have a better chance of receiving a grant...if there is something formally experimental about their proposals." (Milner, p. 115) This may be conservatism or it may be merely traditionalism, but it comes off as *elitism*. Elitism has plagued the arts in Canada as long as they have been practiced. Art is produced by a small community for a community only slightly larger. Attempts to break in are fended off viciously. When the National Gallery of Canada tried to put on a show entitled "Canadian Prints, Drawings and Watercolours," a competition open to everyone, all the major artists boycotted the event. (Harris, p. 483)

There are probably several reasons for this, but one of them has to be the fact that it is the government that supports and maintains the community almost singlehandedly. Few of the artistic media can support themselves. Theater audiences are too small to support major productions. (Milner, p. 116) Canadian music would probably have no presence at all were it not for the Canadian Broadcasting Corpor-

ation, which has been called its "mother hen." (Sabbath, p. 486)

Government patronage is not intrinsically bad, but it is dangerous when it restricts and influences. Quebec, which supports Canada's most thriving artistic community, may have had the greatest successes in promoting the art of its citizens, but it has also had the worst record restricting it as far as subject matter. While it was the first province to create a Ministry of Culture, it was also the first to be accused of favoritism in the allocation of grants. Regarding their once-prestigious *Prix de Concours de Quebec*, a Canadian art critic has said, "The administration of these prizes, which was handled mainly by government officials, had created apathy and dissension among the artists, who became discouraged by the apparent politicking involved." (Harris, p. 486) Paradoxically, however, it is in Quebec that artists have first begun to move beyond those problems, leaving the government behind. Today, Quebec produces Canada's most controversial art and, according to most, Canada's best art.

In all this, the Canadian arts present a unified face, a face that moreover reflects Canadian society. First, rather than revolution and a rejection of inherited societal values, they are committed to a view of community that forgives and embraces problems rather than fighting them. This tendency allows (or forces) them to concentrate on "purely" aesthetic values rather than utilitarian ones. Secondly, an attachment to Old World values and forms persists and bolsters the native reaction to American influences. The marriage of these two influences is starting to produce offspring. The identity that has resulted has become powerful and fruitful. Where once Canadian literature was described as having the quality of "one half-baked phoenix after another" (Frye, p. 29), it has developed into a diverse but coherent community where regional differences are relished while the whole flourishes. Critics have come to this discovery slowly and have been surprised upon arrival. But, as Margaret Atwood points out, it has been there for quite some time. "Canadian writers have not been trying to write American or British literature and failing; they've been writing Canadian literature." (Atwood, p. 237)

Questions regarding government presence

are usually answered with the assertion that without handouts there would be *no* art. But all this is starting to change. Canada's dance troupes, long one of her most respected genres worldwide, are finding out as budgetary concerns squeeze grant money that they can survive commercially. (Milner, p. 116) Quebecers are realizing that "When they're launched properly, Quebec films make as much and, in some cases, more money in Quebec than American films that have huge marketing campaigns."

(Kelly, p. 18) As Atwood mentions, when people realize that a Canadian artistic presence exists, they are surprised, but it is usually a pleasant surprise. When they look, they see "a compellingly spiritual interpretation of the drama called Canada: one that [doesn't] leave out sex or race, but [weaves] them into the fabric of our sometimes suicidal, sometimes murderous striving to live here." (Diamond, p. 6). The revolution is dead. Long live the revolution!

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